

Remembering BRUCE LEE

The Seattle Years Continued

By Paul Bax



Bruce Lee's roots in the martial way began in the scenic town of Seattle, Washington. A close friend and dedicated student of "the Little Dragon" who is often overlooked as a link to the late martial arts master is the seldom heard from Ed Hart. Hart also a close associate of Lee's first American student, Jesse Glover, has retained much of Lee's early teachings and also added a considerable amount of grappling moves to his arsenal of already devastating techniques. In this interview Mr. Hart reminisces about his fondest memories of Bruce Lee and his sadness he felt after his passing.

INSIDE KARATE: Before Bruce opened his official school the workouts were either in parking garages and back yards...

ED HART: At first they were in our apartment and then in the yard and in the summertime we'd go out to the playgrounds and in cold weather we'd go somewhere to get out of the rain. It didn't matter. We didn't have a regular school for quite some time.

IK: How did the training differ from one period to the next?

EH: It didn't differ.

IK: Even after he opened his first school?

EH: Yeah up until he opened his first school it was just informal. Just a bunch of us guys would get together and work out. When more guys started coming around it became kind of loose because a lot of guys would see what he was doing and then

practice it for a few sessions and then you wouldn't see them anymore. There were a few guys who stayed with the core group and we all became good friends, but they were a lot of guys that were kind of "fringies," you know?

IK: Can you talk about Bruce Lee's exact plans about opening up a chain of schools?

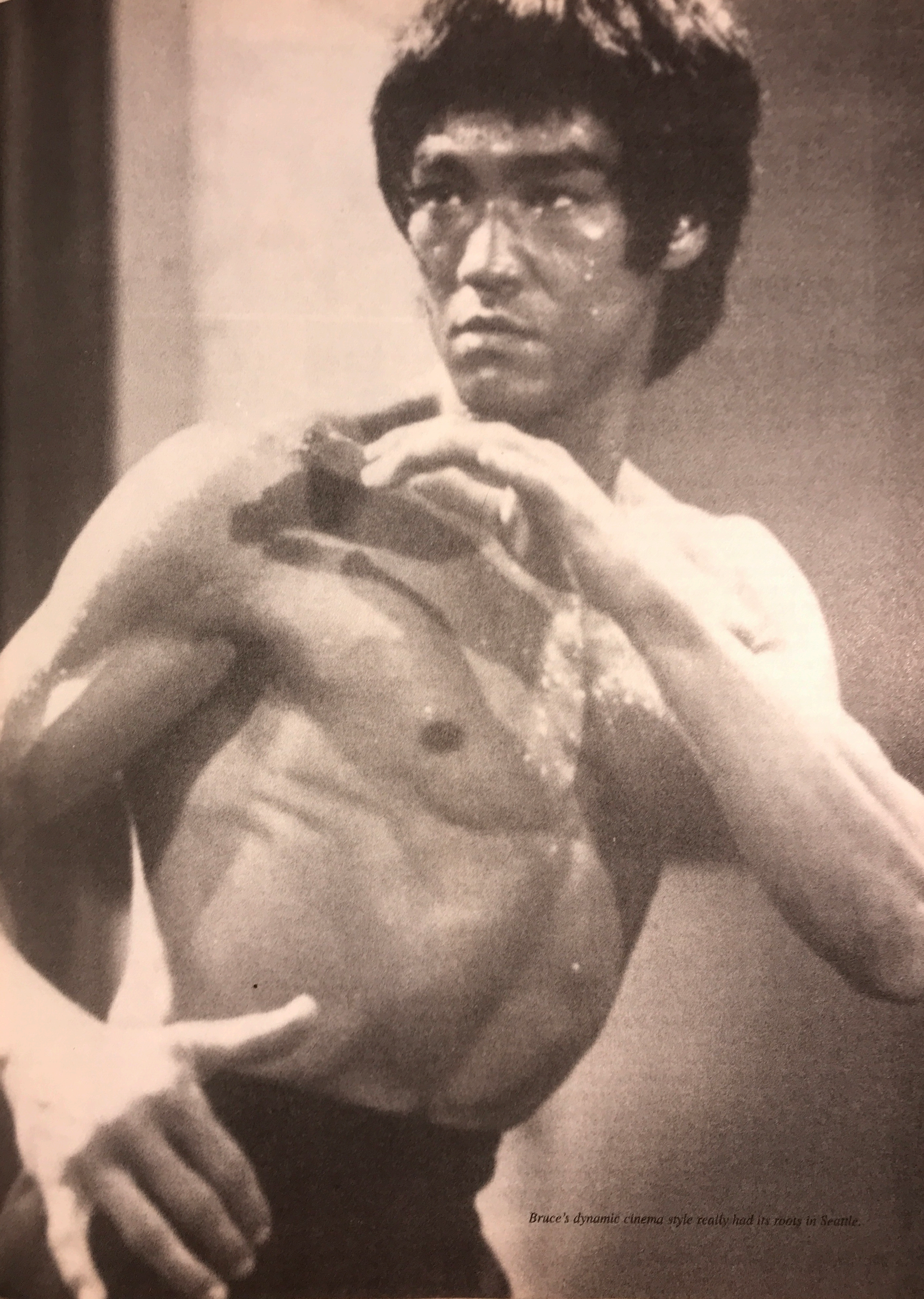
EH: He didn't give us any exact plans, he just said he wanted to open up a chain of schools and spread the art all over the world but he didn't sit down and give us an agenda or anything like that.

IK: What was Bruce like as teacher as opposed to the Bruce Lee outside of class?

EH: Well, when he was teaching us he just kept us practicing. Actually, I don't think he liked teaching very much. He would get us going and have us do the moves over and over and have us perform them. He worked out with a couple of us but he was way too far ahead of us to do a lot of workouts with us. He did work out with us on chi sao and closing. He did a lot of stuff with a few guys but when the group got bigger he would just tell them what to do and just stand there and watch them do it and give them some suggestions. I don't think he liked teaching a lot but he did like to do chi sao and he did like to show closing moves. He liked to practice against any kind of attack. He was always practicing against any kind of attack at all to try and find a weak spot. That's something I do too. I keep looking for weak spots all the time. I'm always questioning.

IK: When the first school opened did he hold a lot of things back as far as chi sao and things like that?

EH: Yeah, I don't think he taught too much chi sao when he opened his school. He was teaching more complicated things. The guy he worked out the most with was Jesse Glover. He worked out with Jesse constantly. If Jesse and I hadn't worked out together I wouldn't have learned as much as I did because I learned more from Jesse than I did from Bruce. In fact, any one from that group who learnt it well or learnt it half way learned it



Bruce's dynamic cinema style really had its roots in Seattle.

from Jesse because Bruce wasn't that dedicated of a teacher. Bruce would show me some moves and Jesse would work with me on them and that's how I got to the point to where I could do them.

IK: During the Seattle Years, Bruce incorporated many styles in his system of fighting. Did it later surprise you that years later Lee often put down many classical systems of martial arts?

EH: Your basic premise is mistaken. That is, you are under the impression that Bruce "incorporated" many styles in his system of fighting. He didn't. He experimented with many styles. He also learned various fighting styles, as well as the forms for those styles, simply because he was a person who had a lot of curiosity. He also liked to learn new things, even if he didn't use them. He was a very fast learner and while he was in Seattle he learned a lot of things which had nothing to do with Gung Fu. But he didn't incorporate very much of the other styles of fighting into his own style. He thought the backfist, which he mostly got from Choy Lay Fut, was a good and logical move, and it ties right in to what he already did. At that time, the Wing Chun style did not use the backfist. But Bruce saw how well it would work under certain circumstances, so he did incorporate that.

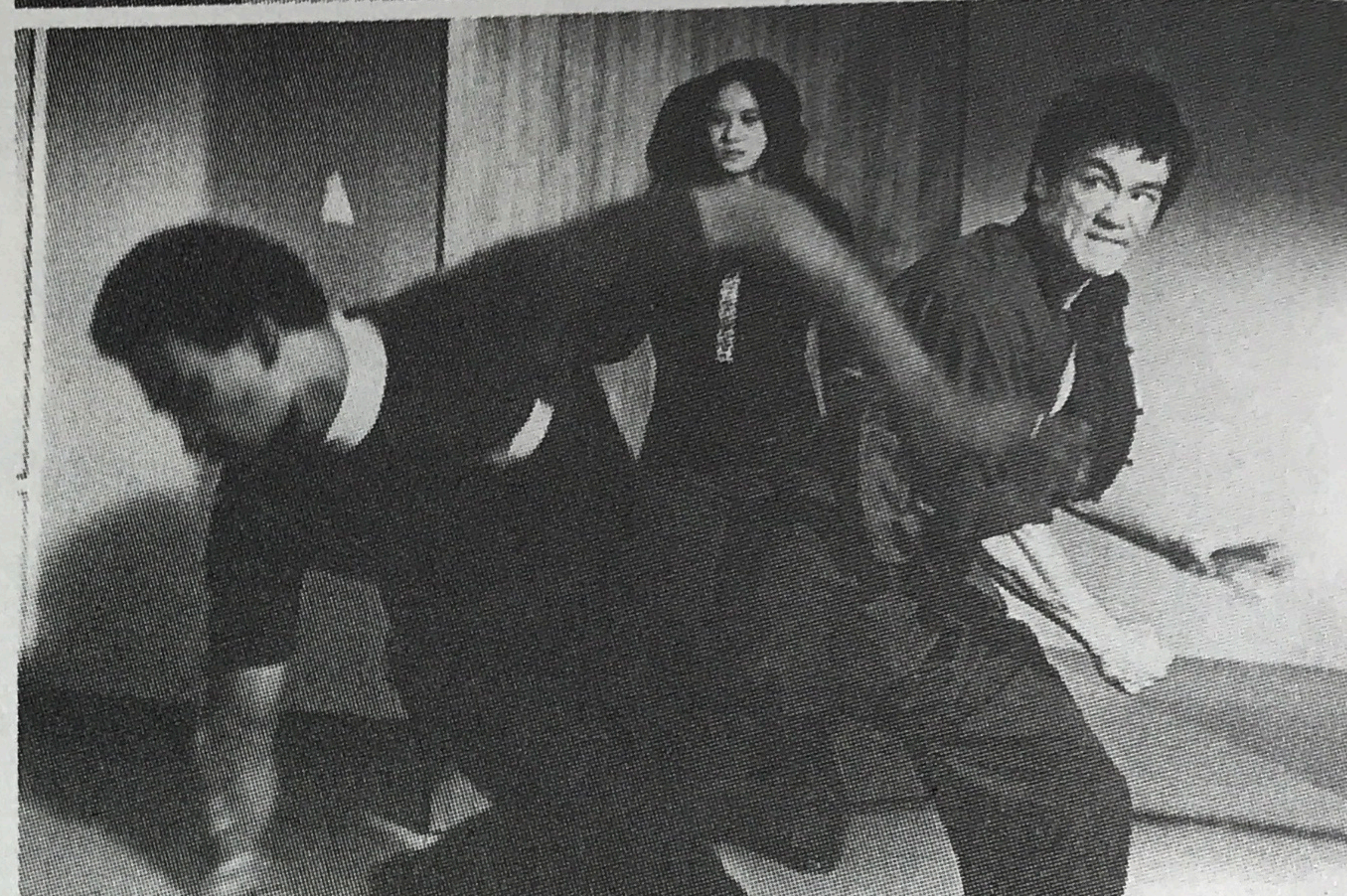
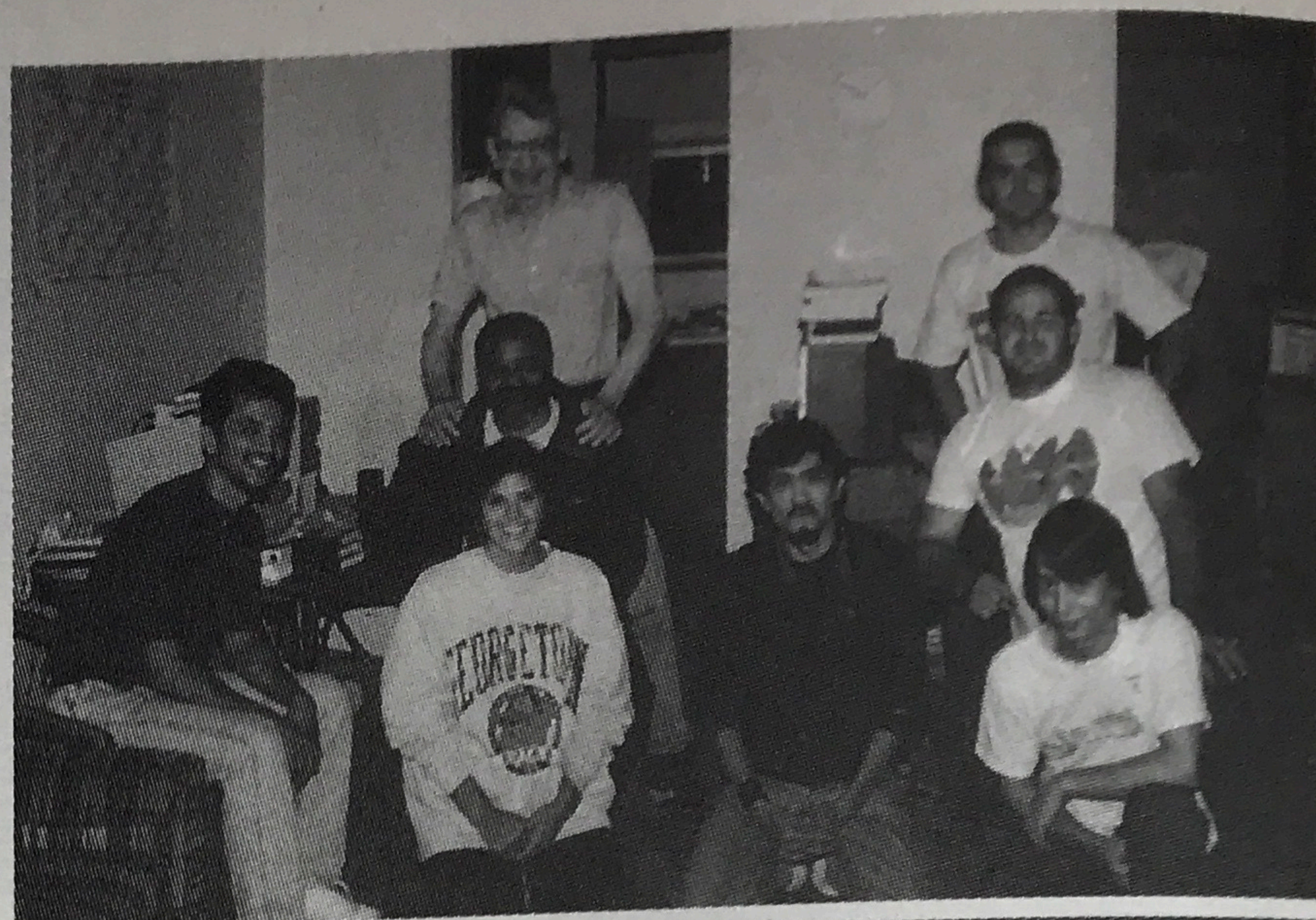
What Bruce did not realize for a quite while was that he was very slowly evolving a style which was uniquely his own. He hadn't started out to do anything like that. He was eternally curious and was constantly trying one thing or another just to see how well it would work. He didn't even think about changing anything. He was just experimenting, learning, finding out new things. This all took several years and what ultimately happened was that he had developed a fighting style which had very few moves, but these moves covered every conceivable situation.

I want to stress that this was his fighting style. Bruce also learned high kicks for fun, just to see if he could do them. He never seriously considered using them in a fight. He also learned a lot of flashy moves, which looked spectacular, but which he would not have used in a fight. When he started teaching publicly he taught some of these moves because people were more impressed by watching them than they were by the things he'd actually do in a fight. He knew that if you want to get a lot of students you have to teach them moves that look good. So he mixed in some of the stuff he would actually do (in a fight) with a lot of flash. In his movies he was even more showy. He did the most complicated moves and did them very well and the public was quite impressed. But that wasn't the way he would fight. You probably already realize that.

IK: Can you recall any interesting stories of the times you were with Bruce and the rest of the students in and out of class?

EH: I never went to a "class" with Bruce. When he started teaching publicly I did not go around his classes. The stuff he was teaching was not the stuff I wanted to learn — he was teaching for the public.

Bruce and Jesse Glover were friends. We ran around together. After a few months we began introducing Bruce to other people we knew. Bruce did not make any new friends on his own for the first few months he was in Seattle because he had heard a lot of negative things about Americans when he was in Hong Kong, before he came to the States. So he was a little shy at first. This was not his real personality though and after a while he did become more outgoing. The training we had with Bruce was all informal. At first it was just Jesse and me, then one or two guys we introduced him to. Then gradually a few more. A lot of these guys came around a few times and then did not come around anymore. Some stayed a little longer. Some, like Leroy Garcia and Taky Kimura, became permanent friends of Bruce. But for a long time; it was just a bunch of friends who would work together and



(Top) Ed Hart standing with his hands on Jesse Glover while surrounded by friends. (Above) Little did Bruce's early students realize that their sifu was destined for international superstardom.

work out and chat. There were no formal "classes." You may not be aware of this but Jesse (Glover) and I were the first American friends Bruce made. Jesse was Bruce's first student and I was the second. Jesse and I were roommates at the time we met Bruce.

IK: You emphasize a lot of grappling in your system of fighting. Was that a result of Bruce Lee's lack of emphasis in the area?

EH: He didn't have a lack of emphasis (in that area). He had a lot for respect of grappling. It's not the result of anything except the fact that the Gung Fu we do ties into grappling so well that you can be punching someone and moving them around and go into a grappling move without any wasted motion at all so that it plugs right into grappling. It's like seamless. You can't tell where the gung fu leaves off and the grappling begins. It ties in so well. I've done a lot of grappling, I have done some wrestling, I've done some judo, I've done jujitsu and I have a great deal of respect for grappling. In the gung fu that I do a lot of stuff isn't taken care of like getting grabbed from behind or if you're down and someone attacks you. The grappling is like a secondary layer over the gung fu it's like the layers of an onion. It ties in so well with the gung fu that you can go from one to the other without anyone seeing where one leaves off and the other begins. That's how well it ties in, there's just no wasted motion at all.

I have bouncers who train with me from out of town who stay here for a week at a time. I work them on control moves and I work them on punching too so their punches are more efficient and so they don't throw such wide punches. I also work them on control moves which they like a lot. They've written me about it, they've phoned me about it, they've told me how they worked and they're just amazed at just how well the control moves work. These con-

control moves are good because you don't have to hurt the guy but if he gets too much out of hand they can revert to punching or break his arm or whatever you have to do but the good thing about the control moves is that you don't have to hurt them. A good bouncer doesn't want to hurt anybody. What he wants to do is either subdue the guy or get him out of the place but without damaging the guy in the process.

The way I got into grappling was just evolution. It wasn't like I sat down and said, "Oh I am going to put in a grappling move in here or there," it just evolved. These things just kind of came to me. I would make a gung fu move and I'd see how well it would tie into the next move if you wanted to control the guy and so I'd just do it and after awhile it just kind of came together on its own.

IK: Have any of your students considered entering The Ultimate Fighting Championship?

EH: No. (laughs)

IK: What do you think about this tournament?

EH: Well, I've thought about it and I don't know exactly what to think of it myself. Jesse (Glover) thinks that they're selective. I'm not sure exactly what to think about it.

IK: What do you think about the Gracies and their grappling techniques?

EH: They're pretty good grapplers. They don't move as quite as well as a wrestler but their grappling is pretty good. They have lots of little tricky moves and ways of interfering on the ground that make the other guy not get on them right because they keep interfering with them. One good thing about the Gracies is that they specialize in chokes and joint locks which is very good. They can get into a choke or joint lock from almost any position so it



A common myth is that Bruce "incorporated" many fighting methods. It would be wiser to say he "explored" these methods.

makes them extremely dangerous. They don't shoot in or do take-downs as smoothly as a wrestler but they're adequate. The stuff they do is more like judo.

IK: Do you think that they would be as successful if they were in an all out street fight? (The UFC does have rules such as no eye gouging, no biting and is performed on a soft mat.)

EH: I don't know, I think they'd do all right in most street fights but they're not punchers at all and if they'd learn how to punch right they could probably be even better fighters, but they're pretty good fighters. There not somebody to laugh at. If they got into a fight with most street fighters they would probably choke him or something.

IK: Do you have any street stories about your students implementing your techniques successfully?

EH: Yeah! I've had several students who were bouncers who wrote to me and told me how a move worked so good in spite of the fact that the guy they were fighting was bigger than them. Not too many of my students get into fights. In fact I keep telling them that if somebody calls you names to ignore them but if they attack you then you react. I had one student who was attacked in a parking lot by a guy who was bullying a girl and my friend made a remark about it and the guy came around a car and lunged at him and my student just hit him, bam-bam-bam and he was just amazed at how fast he went down.

Another time one of my students was driving along and he saw some guy with a knap-sack on his back with a stick in his hand beating a dog. So here's this guy beating a dog and my friend likes animals and he's a real nice guy. He was on a real busy street and he screeched to a stop and jumped out of the truck and ran over to the guy and said, "What the hell you doing to that dog beating him with that stick like that?" and the guy said, "Maybe I'll beat you with it," and he pulled the stick back and my friend just jumped in and took him down with one punch and took the stick out of his hand. Then when the guy was down there cowering he cracked him with the stick and said, "How do you like it?"

He said the guy was a big dude too. So he took the stick and hurled it away somewhere. He grabbed the dog and took it with him and as he was pulling away people started applauding.

IK: What other students from the Seattle period do you keep in touch with besides Jesse Glover?

EH: Well, I keep in touch with Skip Ellsworth and Leroy Garcia. I've stopped into Taky Kimura's store once or twice and said hello and one of my students delivers to his store every day.

IK: Much has been said about Lee's evolution in the martial arts. Have you seen the modifications over the years to form what we have come to know as Jeet Kune Do?

EH: Well, I have seen a lot of people doing it and they all do it differently.

IK: Does it differ that much from what you learned from Bruce?

EH: Yeah.

IK: In what ways?

EH: It's very difficult to explain but it's not the same.

IK: Do you think it's any more effective or less effective?

EH: Well, I don't want to get into that. I just teach what I teach the best I can and try to be a good teacher and I know that what I teach works so I teach my own thing and what ever other people want to teach, I don't know.

IK: You were the time keeper at Lee's famous fight at the YMCA. Do you have any interesting details about the fight?

EH: Well, Jesse Glover's book tells it all. I was amazed. The guy was laying on the floor and we pulled him back and propped him up against the wall and his eyes fluttered open and he looked up at me and asked, "How long did it take him to defeat me?" you know and he sort of half raised up when he asked the question,

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(it took 11 seconds) so I felt so damn sorry for the guy that I doubled it [the time]. I told him 22 seconds and he said, "Ahhuu" and laid back down against the wall like he was utterly crushed. Later on I thought about that and I thought it was pathetic yet funny at the same time.

IK: After witnessing the fight, did that sort of solidify our faith in what Bruce was teaching you?

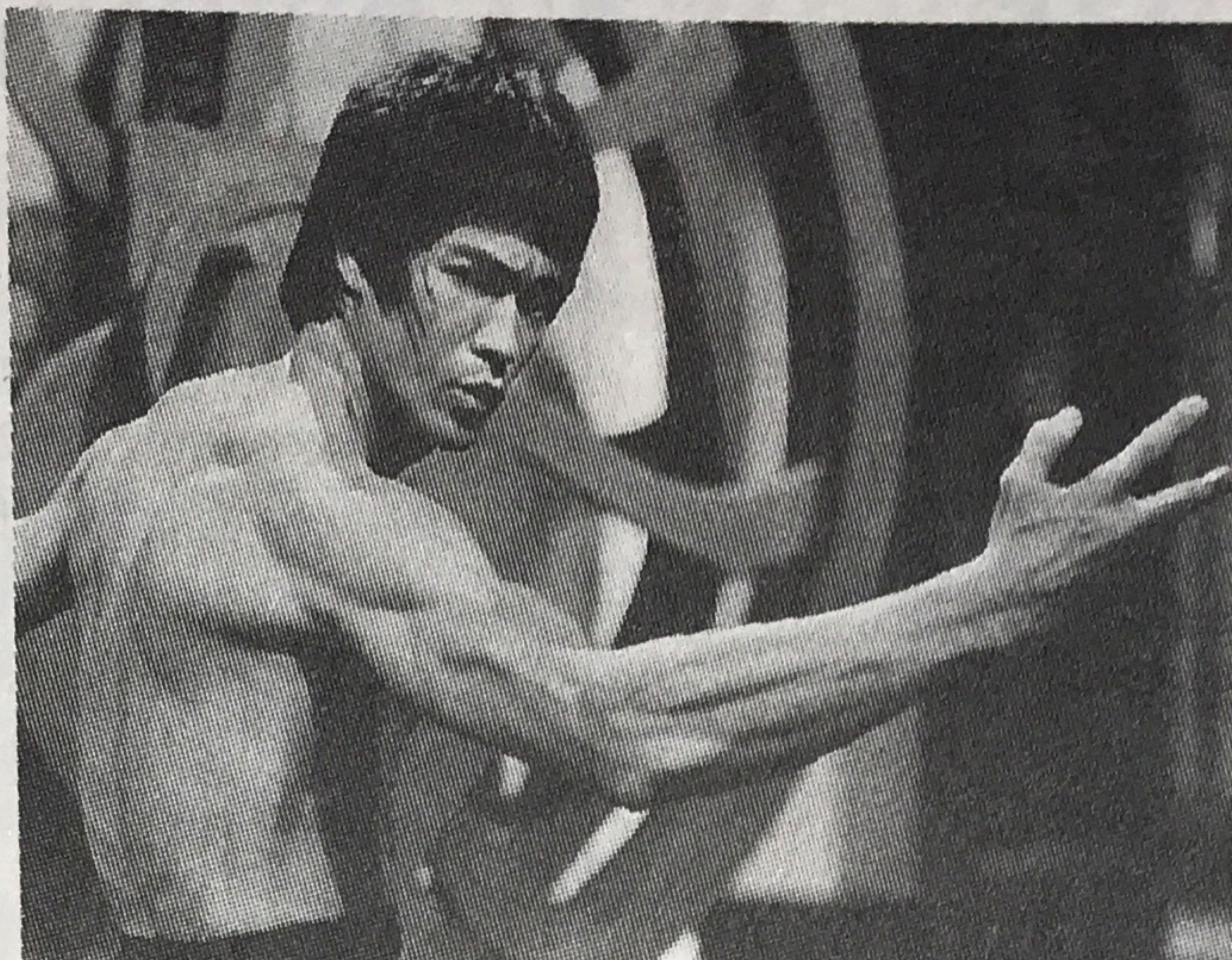
EH: It didn't have to. As a matter of fact I was not a bit surprised by what he did. At the time I was so impressed by him and what he did that I just kind of took it for granted (which is something you should never do). He could handle me so easily. He just went straight punching in on that guy and just tore him apart.

IK: Did you see Bruce much after he left Seattle and can you recall the last time you saw him?

EH: Ah, the last time I saw Bruce was early '63'. Then I moved about forty miles away. I had a job somewhere else and was struggling to keep the money coming in. I almost lost contact with Jesse. Then we moved back to Seattle a couple of years later and Bruce by that time was down in California. So I didn't see Bruce after the early part of 1963.

IK: Did you ever meet Linda Lee?

EH: Unfortunately, I met Linda at Bruce's funeral. I think I said hello and that was about all. She wrote me a very nice thank you note for coming to the funeral. She's a very nice woman.



IK: What were your thoughts about the movies he made?

EH: For awhile I couldn't go to any of his movies he made because I was too worried I would get upset. The guy died and I didn't want to go to a movie and see him like he was alive again; I was afraid it would make me very upset. When I finally did go to a movie with him in it my head was okay. I didn't go

for two or three years. His movies were out for several years before I finally went to one.

IK: Did you see any underlying principles in your training that Bruce included in some of his fight scenes?

EH: Yeah, a flash here and a flicker there but most of it was for the public.

IK: Did you ever see the movie, "Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story," and what was your opinion of it?

EH: Nothing. It was all right. It was as inaccurate as hell.

IK: Do you have any plans to do another video or possibly write a

book?

EH: Well, I've had people ask me to do another video and I might, I don't know. I don't have any plans on anything right now, just teaching.

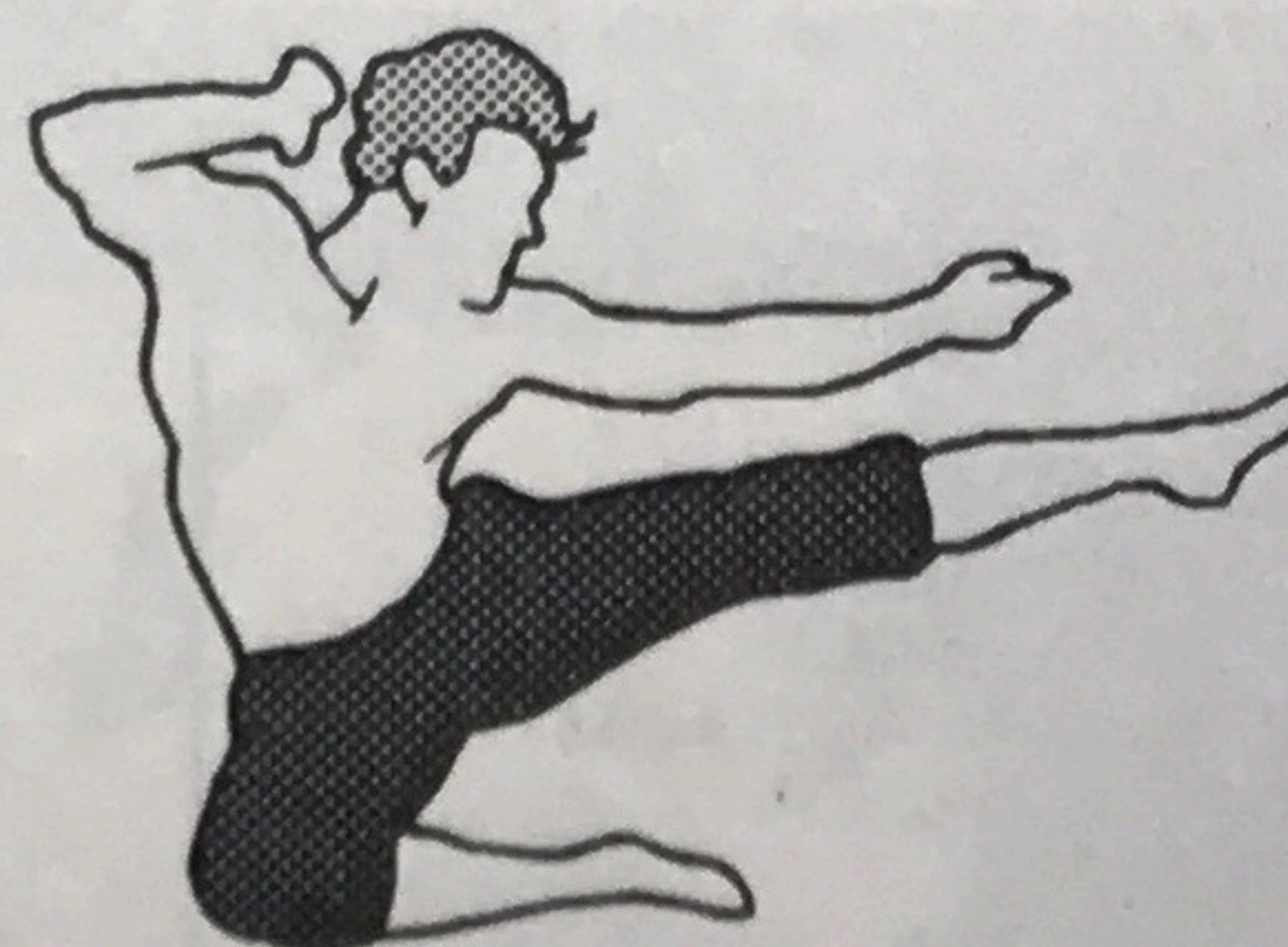
Paul Bax is a martial artist and Bruce Lee historian who lives in Missouri. He can be contacted by sending a self addressed stamped envelope to: 2266 Romaine Creek Road, Fenton, MO 63026. For more information on ordering Ed Hart's grappling tape write to: CSI Productions, 16212 Bothell Everett Hwy., Ste. F307, Mill Creek, WA 98012.

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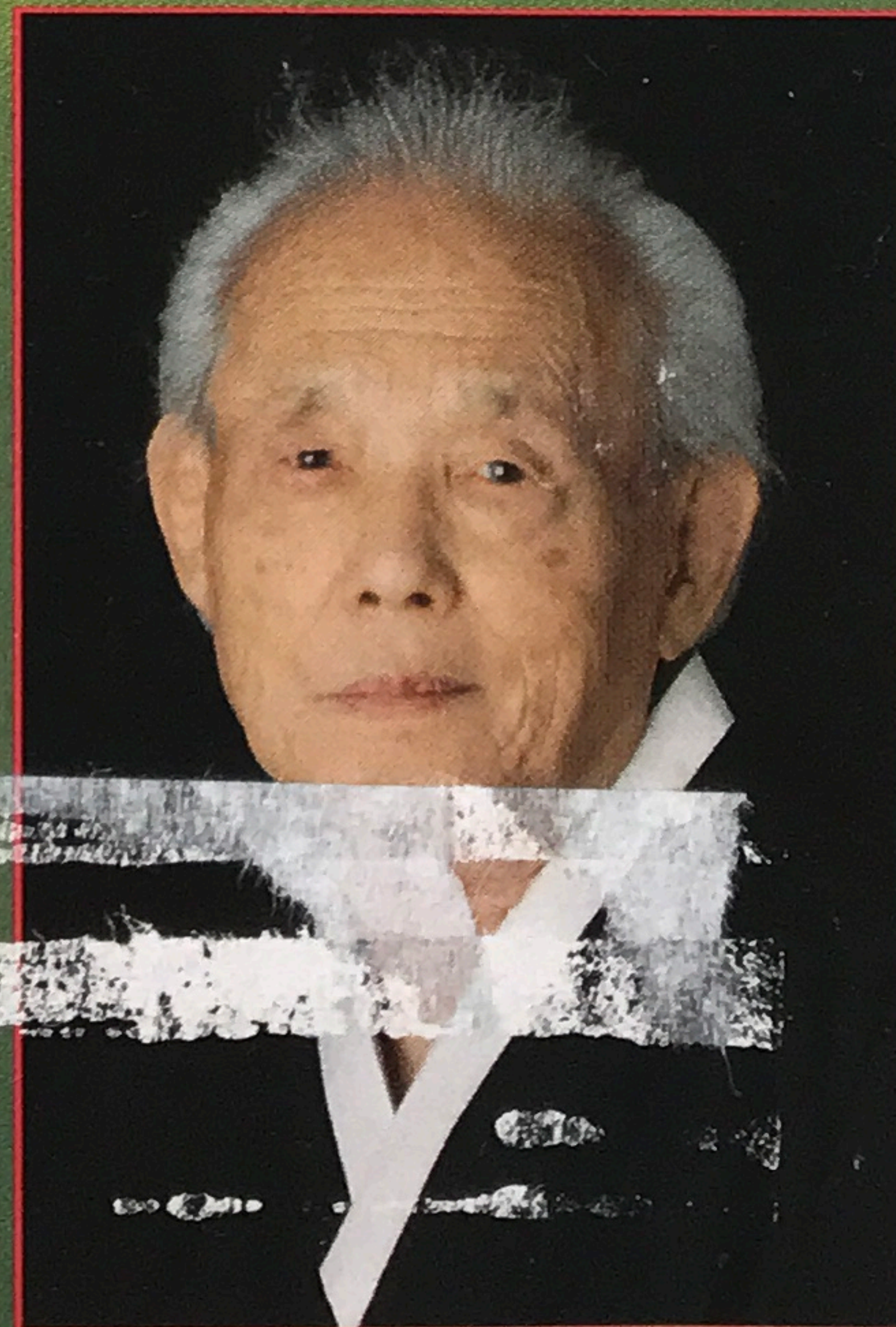
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